



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: August / September 2017

What's On...

Wednesday 2nd August, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 3rd August, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul: Goes to the Park'
Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 6th August, 11am-noon
'On Being Wrong'
Led by Jane Blackall
(please note: no children's group today)

Wednesday 9th August, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 13th August, 11am-noon
'The Wisdom of Humility'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th August, 12.30-1.00pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Jane Blackall

Wednesday 16th August, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 17th August, 6.45 for 7-9pm
Poetry on a Summer's Evening
with Carole, Brian and Sarah

Sunday 20th August, 11am-noon
'Triumph of the Heart'
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 20th August, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 20th August, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 23rd August, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 27th August, 11am-noon
'Victories of the Spirit'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
**Includes a charity collection for
'Send a Child to Hucklow'**

Wednesday 30th August, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

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A Sense of Purpose

A Message from our Minister

The idea that life is empty and meaningless has served me well over the years. I first heard it in a Zen Buddhist monastery where I'd gone on retreat, emotionally bruised at the end of a relationship. Full of my misery, I was jarred by a monk who laughed at my predicament and taught another way of approaching life. He slowly explained how liberating it can be to let go, to release attachments, to avoid fixed positions of 'how we think things *should* be'. By stepping away from thoughts about our own significance we are freed to live more lightly in the present moment, allowing an unknown future to unfold.



If life is inherently empty and meaningless, on one level nothing matters. But it also matters greatly. It matters how we live our lives, how we treat one another, how we share our planet earth home. No external forces give our lives meaning or decide our life purpose for us. We are the meaning makers and it is for us to shape our lives according to our circumstances and to find a sense of purpose to guide our living. The nothingness of Buddhism contains everything that is. Our individual identity matters less once we realise we are part of the whole.

How then shall we live our lives? In the months ahead, let's have conversations where we explore what matters most to us. Let's explain to one another the values and commitments that guide our steps. Let's share the wise words that help us choose our paths. Our sense of purpose may change as life develops. Sometimes life dictates that we take on a purpose we might never have thought would be ours – perhaps caring for a relation who is unwell, dealing with our own health issues, taking on a neighbourhood campaign that needs our energy. Some of us have known the pain of purposelessness when it feels hard to get going each day, difficult to put one foot in front of another. If you were asked to describe in a few words your own sense of purpose, what might you write?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

To laugh often and much;

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;

*To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch
or a redeemed social condition;*

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.

This is to have succeeded.

Bessie Stanley, often attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Singing for the Spirit' with Corrina Dolso starts in September * Visiting Other Congregations *
'Further Reflections on Essex Church History' by William Featherstone * Committee News
* Pokemon Excitement * 'Poetry on a Summer's Evening' with Brian, Carole and Sarah *
Czech Unitarians * 'Home and its Absence' address by Sarah Tinker * Amber's Fundraising Run
* Poems by Brian Ellis * 'Liberating Labels' sermon by Jane Blackall * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians are a community of kindred souls who meet each week at Essex Church in Notting Hill Gate to explore, reflect, converse, be still, share joys and sorrows, and support one another on life's journey. We are proud to be part of a worldwide and historic liberal religious tradition.

Our main activity is Sunday worship and we hold a service each week at 11am. All are welcome. Services are usually themed and include readings from a variety of sources, prayers, music, singing, stillness, and a short sermon. Our children's leaders provide an alternative programme of activities for younger people.

Small-group activities are another key part of our programme. We offer courses and one-off workshops exploring spiritual and religious matters and considering life's meaning together with others on the spiritual journey.

If you are aware of any member of our community who is unwell or suffering in some way and who would welcome contact from others in the church, please contact our minister.



Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church
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Notting Hill Gate
London W8 4RT

Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Singing for the Spirit with Corrina Dolso

Thursdays 21st September, 19th October,
16th November from 7.15-8.15pm
Here at Essex Church



A time and space to find spiritual joy through singing together. In this candlelit hour we will join in simple repeated chants, rounds, and songs interspersed by silence and occasional readings. No singing experience is necessary. Please contact Corrina if you would like more details: corrina.dolso@bopenworld.com.

Corrina Dolso

Children's Group



Nadia and family are taking a well-deserved break and heading back to Italy for the summer. Jen will be leading our children's group throughout the summer except for 6th August when we won't have our usual children's activities but children are welcome to bring something along to keep them busy during the service that day.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting

Stewarding:

6 th August:	Michaela von Britzke
13 th August:	Juliet Edwards
20 th August:	Michaela von Britzke
27 th August:	Brian Ellis

3 rd September:	Julia Alden
10 th September:	Brian Ellis
17 th September:	Veronica Needa
24 th September:	????? <i>(can you help?)</i>

Coffee:

6 th August:	Sue Smith
13 th August:	Liz Tuckwell
20 th August:	Roy Clark
27 th August:	Helena Coope

3 rd September:	????? <i>(can you help?)</i>
10 th September:	Juliet Edwards
17 th September:	Sue Smith
24 th September:	Liz Tuckwell

Greeting:

6 th August:	Brian Ellis
13 th August:	Gina Bayley
20 th August:	Veronica Needa
27 th August:	EVERYONE! ☺

3 rd September:	Roy Clark
10 th September:	Sue Smith
17 th September:	Niall Doherty
24 th September:	Juliet Edwards

We circulate the rota list each month by email. Please contact Jane if you are willing to be on the rota mailing list.

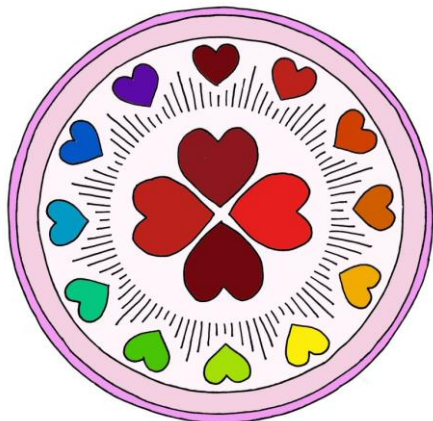
rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 3rd August, 7th September,
5th October, 2nd November from 7-8pm

*Gathering at 6.45pm downstairs in the library
Followed by social time and refreshments*



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. In August, 'Heart and Soul' will go to the park, as Sarah explains: 'Top of the World? Under the Weather? Come and join us for a 'whatever the weather' spiritual experience in the park. We'll meet at the church and leave at 7pm – for a lovely sit down gathering in the setting sun or a sheltering under brollies as we walk our talk and our prayers. Let us know if you'd like a fold up chair carried for you rather than a picnic blanket.'

September's 'Heart and Soul' will be led by Jane on the theme of 'The Gifts of the Spirit'. This will be followed by refreshments (Jane's home-made cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Visiting Other Congregations



Two Unitarian events to join in the weeks ahead:

Sunday 3rd September: Southend Unitarians The Meeting House, Grange Gardens, SS1 2LL

Children's leader Jen Hazel and Rob Gretton invite us to join Southend Unitarians on Sunday September 3rd at 3.00 for a 3.30pm start for their building's anniversary service. We'll be taking a gift from our congregation to theirs. Let Sarah know if you plan to join this trip to the seaside. Candy floss eating will be optional.

Sunday 10th September: Lewisham Unitarians 41 Bromley Road, Catford, SE6 2TS

And Lewisham Unitarians invite us to join them on September 10th at 3pm for their 120th anniversary service. The service will be led by District Minister Rev. Martin Whitell and will be followed by a celebration tea. Please let Sarah know if you wish to attend as we need to let them know how many people to expect.



Our 40th Anniversary Celebration: We had a bumper turnout on the 23rd July with friends old and new coming from near and far!

Further Reflections on Essex Church History

Howard's Reflections in the July Newsletter bought back many memories - Howard, of course, features in quite a few of those! I think I can add a little to his account, and fill in a few gaps.

When I first attended a service at "Essex Church" the site in Palace Gardens Terrace was a hole in the ground that could only be glimpsed through the chinks in the hoardings that stopped anyone falling in. The Church met in the church halls of St Mary Abbot's Church, Kensington. This was on a "grace and favour" basis to a fellow congregation in Kensington, and so no rent was paid as far as I am aware. This was a remarkably enlightened attitude, even for the 70s, but it did mean that when the premises were needed for other things Essex Church had to vacate. This was during the ministry of the Reverend Eirion Phillips which continued to the congregations' next home - the British Humanist Association, as Howard relates. The BHA occupied what had been a large mansion house, and services were held in what had been the front drawing room of the house - quite large enough for the congregation then. My camera then was rudimentary by today's standards so the quality of the pictures is not great but the first was taken in that room, and features Lt. Col. J. A. C. Kidd, an Army doctor and veteran of the Dunkirk evacuation, he was a stalwart of the Church at that period. It is from the BHA era that the hiring of a meeting room on the first floor of the Mall Tavern dates. It was used for Trustee and Congregational Committee meetings (entirely separate in those days) because the BHA room was only available for a limited period, on Sunday. (Thus any impression of high jinks at meetings can be firmly quashed!)

Howard is right to single out Bob and Peggy Palmer in his reminiscences but I have even stronger memories of another interim minister from the United States. The Reverend Tracy Pullman was a real gentleman and a fine preacher but he was also the grandson of George Mortimer Pullman, the inventor of the Pullman Carriage, which naturally appealed to a railway enthusiast like me. I remember his delight when we invited him to the Old Vic to see a performance of the "Ghost Train".



Then there is the minibus trip to Polesden Lacey on the 30th July 1979, and these two photographs may stir some more memories. The one which shows some of the party taking tea at the stables of the house includes a number of people who played a critical role in those difficult 70s and 80s as the Church found its feet again. Going round the table clockwise the man in the blue sweater is Donald Hesson, and next to him is Lily Skelton, who lived in Mall Chambers just over the road from the church, and who was involved in its life for many years. Then, with ubiquitous pipe, is Raymond Williams, author of the history Howard mentions, and Chairman of Congregation and Trustees over the years. The following three ladies I recognise but cannot put a name to (the man with wide grin also) - can anyone help? Just visible is the hair of Frank Claburn, and he is being hidden by Elaine Parker also Chairman of Congregation and Trustees in later years, and a long time choir member. Finally on the far right is Howard looking remarkable unchanged? The other picture (see opposite page) was taken on the same day by person unknown, and left-to-right we have Howard, are those flares; then the Featherstones, Elizabeth nursing Richard who would be two years old the next day, and myself in a somewhat louche pose; then we can see a better picture of Donald Hesson (seated) and Frank Claburn (standing); finally Patricia Walker, as she then was.

Thank you Howard for stirring those memories

William Featherstone



World Congress of Faiths (WCF)



Familiarity and Alienation:

Interfaith encounter under a different spotlight

Thursday 7th September 2017,
9.30am to 4.30pm, Goldsmiths University

A cross-disciplinary conference exploring the difficult questions and seeking fresh answers.

It is no longer unusual for different faiths to find common purpose, and to enjoy dialogue. But what are the difficult questions in such encounters in the light of the human tendency to create insider and outsider groups? What is the relevance for current life and integration policy? This cross-disciplinary day conference promises new perspectives for interfaith relations.

Conference fee of £40-60 includes buffet lunch.

For more information and to register see:

www.wcfconf2017.eventbrite.co.uk



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 20th August, 17th September**

Midweek class on Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

An hour of whole-body conditioning, done barefoot to diverse music. Delivering a cardiovascular workout for any level of fitness. Specific routines allow you to experience - the power of the martial arts, the stillness of the healing arts and the joy of movement through dance.

Cost £10 for drop-ins (£8 to concessions / church members) or a block of 5 classes for £40 to use within a three month period.

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674



L-R: Howard Hague, William, Elizabeth and Richard Featherstone, Donald Hesson, Frank Clabburn, Patricia Walker

Thematic Ministry



August's focus will be on 'Triumph and Disaster', followed by 'Purpose and Mission' in September. One of the aims of thematic ministry is to encourage people to get involved, to make the theme part of your own focus for the month. Below are some ideas of ways to explore our themes for the next two months and do get in touch if there's a particular reading or song you'd like to offer on a Sunday or maybe a piece you'd like to write for the newsletter. Let us know. Thanks to everyone for the interesting conversations that we're having about these topics. Our Sunday conversations will start again on 24th September. Future themes: October – 'Generosity', November – 'The Unknown' and December – 'Hospitality'.

Here are some ways you might choose to explore our themes for the next two months.

Triumph and Disaster:

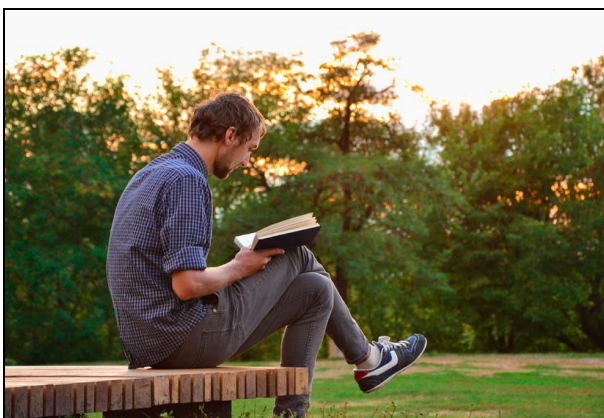
- The old saying 'pride comes before a fall' can be a painful message to hear. But as you reflect on your life are there times when you did take a tumble, metaphorical or real? What did you learn from that 'fall'?
- Make a list of ten achievements that you're proud of in your life. Allow yourself to feel pleased with yourself and simply be aware of any inner voice that warns you 'not to boast' or 'get too full of yourself'.
- Rudyard Kipling in his poem 'If' suggests that you are mature 'If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster / And treat those two impostors just the same'. What helps you to step back and observe the changeable nature of good fortune in your life?

Purpose and Mission:

- Has your life purpose changed over time? What phase of life do you feel yourself to be in now and how would you describe to a friend what your life now is all about?
- Is there a poem or quotation that best encapsulates your sense of mission and purpose in life? Or do you have objects in your home that remind you of what's most important to you?
- Parker J. Palmer writes: *"But if I am to let my life speak things I want to hear, things I would gladly tell others, I must also let it speak things I do not want to hear and would never tell anyone else! My life is not only about my strengths and virtues; it is also about my liabilities and my limits, my trespasses and my shadow. An inevitable though often ignored dimension of the quest for 'wholeness' is that we must embrace what we dislike or find shameful about ourselves as well as what we are confident and proud of."* Some people regard the 'quest for wholeness as one of life's purposes. If that is true, then what might your next step towards wholeness be?

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

Poetry on a Summer's Evening with Brian, Carole and Sarah



**Thursday 17th August, 6.45pm for a 7pm start,
finishing by 8.30pm, with refreshments.**

Everyone is invited to join us for an evening of summer poetry with themed music and refreshments too. Organised by Brian Ellis and Carole Grace, we ask people to choose a poem they'd like to bring which fits our seasonal theme. If you let Sarah know your poetry choice in advance we will make sure we have enough copies.

Milestone on Uxbridge Road

(London 7 Uxbridge 8)

O hail! O welcome!
eighth decade,
now I've reached
three score years and ten.

(Between us though
I'd like another go;
wise in retrospect,
live a life of new aspect).

O romantic! O dreamer!
this can come to naught.
Time's prisoned years
can't be released;
life's curfew tolls
me on my way.
The next milestone's
to be sought.

(London 8 Uxbridge7)

Brian Ellis

Sunday Afternoon Tea Dances at Essex Church



We had another great get-together in July as you can see from the photos and our tea dances are going from strength to strength. Save the date and join us for another tea dance with social dancing and actual tea and cake on October 22nd (future dates into 2018 are also listed below)! Enjoy a gentle afternoon learning some basic social dancing steps with Rachel Sparks who can teach even the most left-footed people. This is an inclusive event for anyone including LGBTQIA+ people and we ask that everyone is respectful to each other. The partnering at this tea dance is gender-neutral, meaning anyone can lead and anyone can follow, and we are completely body positive. We ask you not to wear high heels as we need to protect the floor! You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to raise money for our nominated charity, Diversity Role Models.

Tickets: £10 on the door (free entry to members of Essex Church)

For more information contact: rachel@rachelsparksdance.co.uk / www.facebook.com/rachelsparksdance

Save the Dates: Sundays 22nd October 2017, 11th February 2018, 6th May 2018 (May date TBC)

Findhorn Unitarian Experience Week: 27th January to 3rd February 2018

A unique opportunity to be part of a Findhorn Experience Week in good company with other Unitarians. The total cost of the week is £660 plus travel costs but there may well be possibilities of subsidies. If this week interests you, do talk to Sarah soon for more information. Findhorn is a community that places spirituality at the centre of all activities and it's an inspiring adventure in living in attunement with one another and with the environment. 'Love in action' is their approach to all tasks, with daily Taize chanting and meditation sessions to join.

Good Cause Collection of the Month

Send a Child to Hucklow

Collection on Sunday 27th August



“Send a Child to Hucklow” Fund is a Trust to arrange and administer holidays at the Unitarian Holiday Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire in the United Kingdom for groups of disadvantaged children, having no regard to religious, political, racial and other considerations. The only condition is that the children selected would not otherwise have a holiday.

For more info: www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk

‘Glass Door’ Homeless Charity

Collection on Sunday 24th September



As London’s largest emergency winter night shelter, Glass Door (formerly WLCHC) provides a safe, warm place to sleep for up to 100 men and women a night in partnership with churches across Hammersmith, Fulham, Kensington, Chelsea, Barnes and Putney. Homeless guests also access advice, food, showers and laundry facilities year-round from our Chelsea drop-in day centre. Glass Door not only saves lives by providing refuge from the cold, we also help our guests build more stable futures.

For more information: www.glassdoor.org.uk

Recent Charity Collections:

June – Unitarian General Assembly – £126.01

July – Action for Disability – £212.18

Collections for Grenfell Tower – £391.28

In addition we heard from Jillian and Michael who run the London Meditation Centre, who meet regularly here at Essex Church. ‘Thank you so much for supporting our Grenfell Tower fundraiser last Monday by giving us use of the space without charge. We raised £1,500 in total at a very special evening. Thank you all.’

Church Committee News



Our next management committee and trustees’ meeting will take place on Thursday 31st August at 7pm. Do let any committee member know if there are matters you would like to raise.

Watch our back garden for possible building work this summer to improve the drainage on the ‘drawbridge’ and to level the paving slabs. We’re still waiting to hear from the roofing contractors about their plans to deal with the on-going roof leaks. Melvin from Audiotronics is booked in to do some work on our microphone systems. Jacques Samuels are coming to fix a quite serious problem with the piano pedals. Thanks to Arda and Brian for quietly getting on with lots of jobs and tidying tasks. Have you noticed the shed doors have changed colour? Thanks to Stephen who has been doing a weekly clean at the front of the church – sweeping up, wiping the benches and noticeboards and generally helping us to look smart. Whilst Gitana is taking a well-deserved month’s break from her cleaning duties, we are glad to have Jan and Renate cleaning on a Saturday evening for us. But don’t let this stop you from tackling a cleaning task if you get the urge or see something that’s looking dirty or untidy. Materials are in the kitchen cupboard. Jenny in the south of France and Natasha in Canada are continuing to deal with our finances and lettings, whilst Juliet has temporarily taken on the task of reconciling our accounts each month. Thank you everyone! And there’s always more that needs doing so do say if you have some spare time and energy. Would anyone like to become our tablecloth tsar? You’ll have a generous budget and every encouragement to find new ways of removing candle wax.

We have recently heard from SOS Children’s Villages about how the girls we sponsor in Swaziland, Patience and Fortunate, are getting on. The twins are both doing well. Fortunate is academically excellent and was amongst the top three in her final examinations this year. She is doing particularly well in science, maths, and English. Fortunate shows an aptitude for leadership and takes on responsibilities in the home, at school, and in the village where she leads the African dance group. Patience has worked hard at school to progress to the next form. She is aiming for a future career in nursing. Patience is a member of the school choir which won a regional competition last year and she was thrilled to be part of the group which travelled to the national choral competition. The update also commends Patience on her cheerfulness and her spiritual development. We are committed to giving £1,000 a year to support the girls’ education and their lives in the SOS Village. Can you help? All contributions gratefully received, with cheques made payable to Essex Church and marked on the back ‘SOS Sponsorship’. Can we raise £1,000 before Christmas? Educating girls is apparently one of the best ways to lift a country’s economic situation.

Czech Unitarian Visitors

With our building a lot quieter for the summer holidays, we were able to offer nine Unitarians from the Czech Republic chance to stay in the church for three nights as part of their grand tour of Unitarian congregations. They are also visiting Ditchling, Norwich, Cross Street Chapel in Manchester, Kendal, Nottage and the much loved Chapel from Dre-fach Felindre, now situated at St Fagans open air Museum of Welsh Life near Cardiff. (If you've not been it's well worth a visit.) Our guests brought us a special gingerbread biscuit and ceramic bowl, in the shape of the Czech Republic and would very much like people from our congregation to visit them in Prague one day.



Inclusive Communion

Sunday 13th August and 10th September at 12.30pm



Once a month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we experience a variety of approaches. All are welcome to participate. If you would like to find out more about these services then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.

‘Finding Our Voice’

Monthly Singing Workshops

Sunday 20th August and 17th September
from 12.30pm to 1.15pm

Margaret has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice. These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound. Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability.

'Gathering the Waters'

In the service on Sunday 10th September



Please collect a small amount of water from any summer travels you go on, or from your balcony or garden, or from your tap at home to contribute to our gathering the waters ceremony on 10th September.

'In times of crisis, meaning can be a source of strength: meaning enables us to endure and prevail through difficult times. Meaning heals us not by numbing our pain or distracting us from our problems but by reminding us of our integrity: of who we are, of what we are doing, and how we belong. Meaning gives us a place to stand: a place from which to meet the events of our lives; a way to experience life's true value and its mystery. Most of us live far more meaningful lives than we realize.'

Steven Glazer



'The purpose of life is to be alive. Not to gather objects, achieve, accumulate successes, or forge your body to fit a mould. It's simply to be alive. To touch, feel, sense, hear, see, and live in a dynamic flow of whatever arises in the moment; to accept the wild and crazy thoughts that go through your mind, your animal nature, your wisdom, the fears that arise and grip your chest, the laughter that brings tears, and the joy that takes you beyond yourself. To be alive is to meet and accept every part of yourself – the scuzzy, sweet, passionate, talented, or slow. From this place of self-acceptance you can be a good friend to yourself and others.'

This does not preclude achieving, learning, or taking good care of yourself, but you do so because your body, mind and energy converge to do whatever feels in harmony with the aliveness that you are.

From this point of self-acceptance our consciousness spills over into the vast expanse of human experience and we start to see the connections between all sentient life, between our brothers and sisters everywhere. Said another way, we start to experience love.'

Charlotte Kasl

Amber's Fundraising Run for 'Mary's Meals' Charity



One of my goals for the year was to get back in to running and do a race to raise money for a charity. I will be running the Run Richmond Park 10k on 5th August 2017.

My chosen charity is Mary's Meals. I have been passionate about the mission of Mary's Meals since I read the book *The Shed that Fed a Million Children* last year. The book traces the journey of the charity and its founder, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow. It began as a small personal project to provide donations to war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina. It has grown in to a large organization which works in 14 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The main focus of the charity is to provide one nutritious meal a day to children in a place of education.

Mary's Meals website states "These life-changing meals attract hungry children into the classroom. The food fills their empty bellies so they have the energy and opportunity to learn, giving them the chance of a brighter future. The meals also support families struggling to feed their children while boosting the country's wider economy." A donation of £13.90 will feed one child for a full school year. Mary's Meals is currently feeding 1,230,171 children. At least 93p of every pound donated goes towards charitable activities. I have set a goal to raise £400 which will feed 28 children for a school year.

If you feel moved by the work Mary's Meals is doing I would really appreciate any donations to help me reach my goal. You can donate to my project online at goo.gl/3cfrck. I will continue my efforts until I reach my goal even if the day of the run has already passed. I will be thinking of the kindness and generosity of all contributors as I run very slowly but surely on the 5th of August! Thanks.

Amber Jones



Pokemon Excitement!



Thanks to Sylvie and Eifion who were married here in 2015, the mystery of more than 100 young people suddenly gathering in front of our church one Sunday afternoon was explained, sort of. They were all playing Pokemon, a game app that has people travel the world looking for Pokestops and gyms, collecting points. We've known for a while that there's a Pokestop outside our church but now we have a gym too and 5 star raid battles can apparently be fought and won, in our front garden. For a few minutes players were able to capture some legendary Pokemon characters here and more points were gained the more people who joined in. I did invite them all in to join our inclusive tea dance but they seemed intent on Pokemon hunting instead.

Unitarians at London Pride



50 or more Unitarians gathered for July's PRIDE march here in London. Five of us were from Kensington Unitarians and plenty of other congregations were represented. With rainbow flags and cheery T-shirts we made our presence felt, despite being next to the Walt Disney funded giant balloons. We were placed towards the back of the parade and it was some hours before we began to march, the delay being partly due to the large numbers of groups involved. But we were also delayed by a protest 'lie in', by people protesting the increasingly corporate nature of the groups marching. Should we be pleased that banks and insurance companies now fund LGBTQ+ groups of employees to take part in PRIDE or is it time to think of new ways to celebrate and affirm the worth of all people? All credit to Jeannene for smiling throughout a long, hot afternoon and handing out so many leaflets.

Rainbow over Walpole Park



if.....
you believe one night
there is a rainbow
colours arcing bright
across the black and
star patterned curtains
of the heavens
hasten to its end
to seize the crock
of gods' thoughts
hidden there
return with them
in the dawn
they may be able
to explain
everything
to us.....

Brian Ellis

'Home and its Absence'

Address by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Address from the service on Sunday 9th July

This address is also available online as a podcast.

If you count a 'home' as somewhere you lived for at least six months, then for some people here today counting how many homes you've lived in will be an easy task. For some of you it would require a pen and paper and a bit of time to fathom out – just how many places you have lived in your life. I added mine up to 16 – 16 different places that I've lived in for six months or longer, during 62 years of life. This address is called 'home and its absence'. I wonder how many of us have experienced homelessness. Some I expect. Or that feeling, when you have a place to lay your head, but it's not 'home'. The question of what home means to us is well worth exploring. And the number of places we've lived is a reflection of how old we are, of the pattern of our work and education; it reflects our family history, it reflects the changing world in which we live, it reflects politics and economics, and perhaps there's a bit of free will in there too. Some of us are sometimes lucky enough to make choices about where to live.

We're living in London most of us, a remarkably diverse city, filled with people whose original homes probably cover most areas of the world. I wonder how far some of you have travelled to be here. Show of hands for any Londoners born and bred, other parts of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, other European countries, other continents, any other planets? one day perhaps, one day. (*Editor's note: apparently there were more extra-terrestrials in this Sunday service than any other category. This explains why we're such an interesting congregation.*)

Home is a word with multiple meanings. A place to sleep at night, a place where you can be yourself, a sanctuary from the world outside, a place of self-expression perhaps? Jennifer Kavanagh's quote on the front of today's order of service comes from her book entitled 'The O of Home' – a thought-provoking exploration of what home means to people.

'Home is not just four walls or the country in which we were born. It is not a locked door, an investment, a legal address, or a nation with rigid borders. Home is where the heart is: a yearning for a precious past, a dream of something that has never been, or a present reality. In relationships, with our families, in communities, and with the whole of creation. Yet can we ever be truly at home unless we are at home to ourselves?'

I wonder what this simple word 'home' evokes for you?

For many people around the world, home now means a place they have to leave. A yearning for safety, for freedom, for economic possibilities – has people leave a place they generally love and journey to another land. A while back in our church newsletter I wrote about a conversation I'd had with a young man working at a hand car wash.

Usually your car is speedily washed by a group working together. But on this particular day the car in front needed so much attention that only one person cleaned my car that day and we started to talk. He came from Afghanistan, near Kandahar. When I told him how well he did his job he shrugged and said that it was all he could do because he had no education. I told him that my education meant that much of my day was spent in front of a computer and

then wished I'd not said it because I had the car, the computer and the choice and he did not. He said that he missed Afghanistan but "sometimes we just have to leave places we love." His name was Kasim. He was glad to be in England but it would never be home. I hoped that it might one day feel like home to his children.

As the numbers of people attempting to migrate to other countries increases we are witnessing a rise in nationalism – the love of one's own country coupled with a somewhat unhealthy pride and sense of superiority. There's nothing wrong with being patriotic unless it's used / misused to inflame strong negative feelings towards others, towards foreigners, towards outsiders. And the use of patriotism in encouraging young men to meet their deaths in warfare is a chilling aspect of human nature, many of us would probably agree. Do you think humanity will ever grow out of this tribal behaviour? I suspect few of us will be around to see that golden day.

All the more important then that we cultivate the gracious art of hospitality, of welcoming people into our space – be that our home, our church or our country. An hospitable attitude can help to counter-balance those forces that seek to incite hatred of 'the other'. Hospitality is based on the idea that one day we might be the stranger in need of a kind welcome. Hospitality is an altruistic act. It reminds us to see the other in ourselves and ourselves in the other. Hospitality reminds us that possessions are merely held in trust. How arrogant we humans are to imagine we can own the earth itself. How greedy, how fearful we are, to divert rivers and put up borders. How strange we are to make a line on a map and say that certain people cannot cross that line because they do not have the correct bits of paper in their hands. I'm reminded of the work of Thomas Paine – regarded as one of the founding fathers of the United States, and a significant figure in 18th century revolutionary politics on both sides of the Atlantic. Thomas Paine wrote: *'The World is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.'*

Paine regarded himself as a citizen of the world and surely that is what we all are, ultimately, when lines on a map are blown away by the winds of time; no longer identified by our nation states but by our shared human identity. One race, the human race.

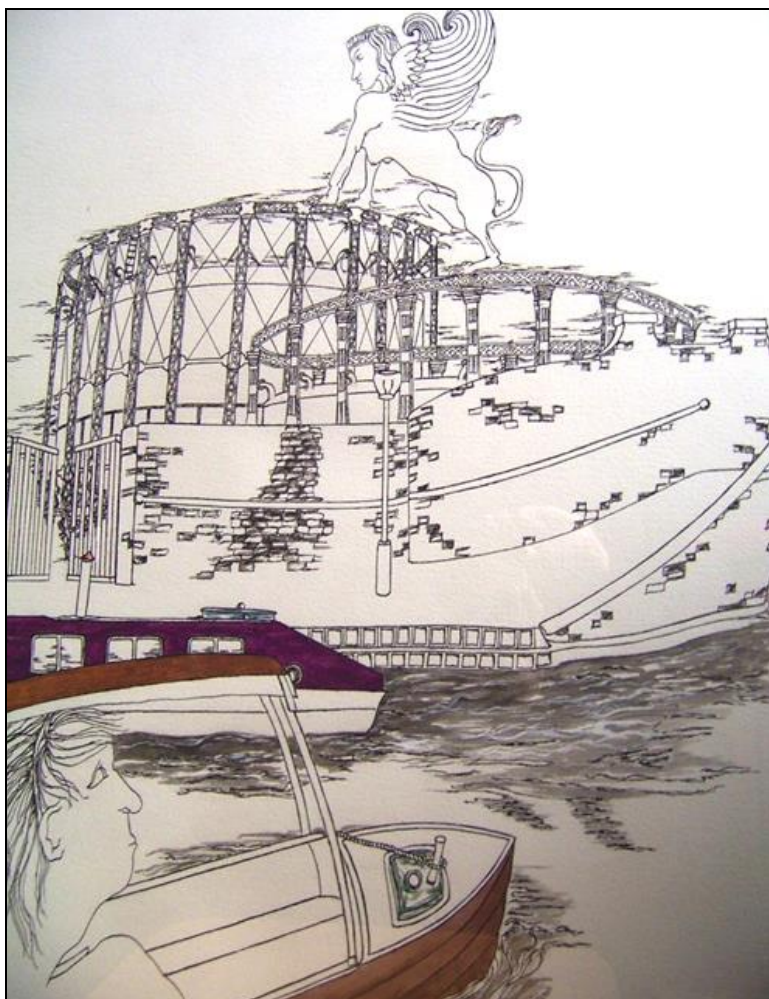
Within the human race the fortunes of each human life vary greatly. Vietnamese Buddhist teacher of meditation, Thich Nhat Hanh, writes: *"In the end the answer to the oft asked question 'where do you live?' is 'here, anywhere, where I am now'. Your true home is in the here and now. It is not limited by time, space, nationality or race. Your true home is not an abstract idea. It is something you can touch and live in every moment. With mindfulness and concentration... you can find your true home in the full relaxation of your mind and body in the present moment. No-one can take it away from you. Other people can occupy your country, they can even put you in prison, but they cannot take away your true home and your freedom."*

Thich Nhat Hanh is encouraging us to develop a sense of being at home within ourselves, whatever the outer circumstances we find ourselves in. For many of us, this is the developmental task of a lifetime – to build our inner sense of being at home, of self-acceptance, self-care, self-nourishment. Only then perhaps can we fully show hospitality to others. Only then might we understand that there is no 'other' for us to fear.

At the end of today's service we'll hear Benjie del Rosario sing a beautiful song from the Philippines called *My Homeland*. Let's appreciate this oh so human yearning for home, let's acknowledge the importance national identity has for some people, and let's work tirelessly to build worldwide connections that transcend the limitations of borders and boundaries. Travelling together, we kindred pilgrim souls on our planet earth, our blue boat home. Amen



'Clarinet Bird' by Heidi Ferid, inspired by Mozart's Clarinet Concerto – Many thanks to Heidi for sponsoring this colour newsletter!



'Sphinx over Gasworks' by E.L. Beel

Harvest Lunch and Sunday Conversation On Sunday 24th September



Bring-and-Share Harvest Lunch, 12.30pm

Please bring along some food or drink to share at our harvest lunch. It worked really well this summer to have people bring along cold dishes which could be served from the container they were brought in (this stops the kitchen from getting too crowded and makes it much easier for whoever is on tea duty).

Sunday Conversation, 1.15-2.15pm: 'Mission & Purpose'

After our Harvest Lunch come and join our Sunday conversation where we'll focus on Kensington Unitarians' mission and purpose. This will be the start of a longer conversation for the months ahead.

'Liberating Labels'

Abridged Sermon by Jane Blackall

Sermon from the service on Sunday 2nd July

The full sermon is also available online as a podcast.

Here at Essex Church, since the start of the year, we've chosen a different theme to focus on each month. For July, the theme is 'Identity', and I put my hand up to lead this service, initially thinking about sexual identity and gender identity in particular. This is partly a nod to next week's Pride march taking place here in London next Saturday – where a bunch of Unitarians will be joining the march to proclaim our inclusive welcome – and partly looking back to the 'Working on our Welcome' training day a few weeks back, which focused on ways in which we Unitarians could be ever more hospitable to people who identify as LGBTQIA (and beyond) – that is, to spell it out – people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and so on. The list of letters has steadily grown in length over the years as the rainbow umbrella has kept expanding to include identities that aren't so prominent, or even visible, indeed some of these identities might be ones you aren't all that familiar with even now, and I know some people aren't at all sure about the need for all these extra labels and letters. In today's service I want to put the case that this proliferation of labels is a really **good** thing.

In a nutshell, the message that I want to get across today is simply:

- It is sensible to be a bit wary about labelling other people, or reducing them to a label, because this can lead to doing them an injustice and failing to see the fully-rounded human.
- However, if someone chooses to apply a label to themselves, they have almost certainly done so for a very good reason, and we ought to respect that, sit up and take it seriously.
- If we listen to voices from marginalised groups about why these labels matter we're going to learn something which has a wider application when thinking about identity, and oppression on the basis of identity.
- No amount of labels can really capture the essence of any human being but labels can help us to reflect on our own identity, to connect with others who have similar identities and experiences, and also to notice and pay attention to the voices of people who are very different from us and whose identity and experiences we might otherwise overlook or even dismiss.

I want to introduce a concept here that I'm going to call the 'Default Human'. This term is not ideal but I struggled to find anything more fitting – so bear with me and let's see where it leads us. In very many spheres of life, here in Britain, and in much of the Western world, our media, our language, for many of us even our internalised ways of thinking, are biased in such a way that the standard model of the 'Default Human' is white, male, middle-class, comfortably-off, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, physically healthy, mentally well, and so on... (there's a long list of characteristics we could add to this list but these are the big ones). I should say – if fate has dealt you that hand – if by chance you have these 'Default Human' characteristics – there is no criticism of you implied in all that follows. These characteristics are, in themselves, morally neutral. But to some extent, in our society, it is implied that these qualities are 'better' than the alternatives... This is, of course, a generalisation, and there will always be exceptions to the rule, but, in general, people who are a better fit to this model of the 'Default Human', who tick more of these boxes, tend to be more well-represented in the media, (their stories are more often told and their experiences reflected in TV, film, and literature), they tend to be more well-represented in positions of power and influence, and they tend to have an easier ride in life in various ways. This seems to be the general pattern, to some degree, at least.

I'm sure this is not news to most of you. Many of you will, I'm sure, instinctively reflect on your own relative advantage and disadvantage in comparison to the 'Default Human'. But – almost as an aside – I want to share just one example which illustrates how this 'default' causes real, material, harm which most of us might be totally unaware of. In an article entitled 'The World is Designed for Men', published two years ago, a product designer called Kat Ely wrote about the issue of seatbelts and driver safety. The 'Crash Test Dummy' – the full-size doll which is strapped into cars for testing – is based on the 'Default Human'. The Crash Test Dummy is the size of the average MAN. For years manufacturers have overlooked the fact that the average WOMAN is smaller, and this makes a difference in terms of where to put the belt and how effective it is. Just a few years ago some high-end manufacturers started testing on both sizes and discovered that cars that were previously getting five-star safety ratings when tested on man-size dummies fell to two-star safety ratings for women. Female drivers are *47% more likely than males* to be seriously injured in a car crash. There are real, material, consequences to us holding this image of the 'Default Human' which isn't really representative of humankind's true diversity. It's not just about overt discrimination from an 'Old Boys Club' (or even 'Default Humans Club') holding the reins of power. It's also about the effect of us holding this 'Default Human' image, which can invisibly influence such things as car safety, drug trials, tool design (all these examples are from the same article) and many more things besides.

If you are **not** white, male, middle-class, comfortably-off, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, physically healthy, mentally well, and so on (there are many other dimensions we could include) then there are likely to be significant aspects of your life experience which aren't well-represented in the media, which rarely get reflected back at you in stories on TV, and which aren't always talked about freely in the street, or down the pub, or over tea at church. If our experiences aren't visible, it can feel like we've been forgotten or ignored by society, it can almost feel as if we don't exist and that our reality doesn't matter to anyone. If we never get to hear about other people like us, we can feel isolated, or we might have feelings and experiences we can't make sense of alone. If our identity is treated as invalid we might feel pressured to conform or to hide away. If some aspect of our identity isn't sympathetically represented in the media or in public life, this might stir up ill-feeling against us, and may well lead to bullying, abuse and violence. It might even enable the authorities to get away with neglecting or scapegoating us.

People sometimes - quite often, in fact – ask the question 'why do we need labels at all?' Or say 'surely we're all just human in the end – can't we just treat everybody the same?' And both of these approaches sound quite reasonable – they're coming from a good place. But actually treating everyone exactly the same doesn't always end up with a fair result. People have all sorts of different needs, and are facing different challenges in life, and taking into account their life circumstances can help us to do right by them. You know Transport for London have been trialling the badge (a literal label!) for people with invisible disabilities saying 'please offer me a seat' – a bit like the 'Baby on Board' badges – to make an analogy to this, if somebody else tells us their labels, gives us a little clue as to who they are, it can give us a better insight into what life is like for them, and then we can try to be a bit more understanding or hospitable once we have grasped that information. We often talk about the 'Golden Rule': 'Do to others what you want them to do to you'. But this assumes that other people would like to be treated the same way that you would like to be treated and that isn't always the case (often for very good reason). Actually, though we ARE all equally worthy of love and kindness we're NOT all the same. And bringing our differences to light helps us to truly SEE each other and live together in right relationship. Perhaps a better formulation of this rule for life, sometimes called the 'Platinum Rule', is: 'Treat others the way they want to be treated.' And that requires us to pay attention to who people really are and what their lives are like.

‘Liberating Labels’ *(continued)*

A good friend of mine described chosen labels as ‘hard-won expressions of selfhood’. As Audre Lorde puts it, in the words on the front of your order of service, *‘If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive.’* In a world where the odds are somewhat stacked in favour of the ‘Default Human’ it can be an act of courage and defiant resistance to proudly claim and proclaim your identity. And giving yourself one of these labels can be the first step in finding and connecting with kindred souls who share the same identity, and similar life experiences, finding a sense of solidarity and comfort, and a larger community where together you can gather the strength to stand up and be seen and heard.

I would like to close with a short prayer, using words adapted from the UU minister Marta Valentin, which acknowledges the great gift of human diversity, and asks for help to see the unseen and hear the unheard, as we strive to live as an ever-more inclusive and welcoming community in which every human life - and label - is fully appreciated as part of the unfolding of God.

God of All Love, Source of All – we human beings
have emerged as a world of rainbows
refracting your magnificent image
and we sing our praises in your honour.

There are many in our city and our wider world
who are lost, hurt, and dying – unseen.
There are many who dare not speak,
many who speak and are not heard,
many who wish to speak and have no words.
Help us all, to gather in community,
worship together, sit at the table as one,
and overcome the misconceptions that divide us.

In this world, which daily challenges our existence,
the inner strength that allows us to hold our ground
enlarges with every resolution
to speak on your behalf,
to honour the divinity within ourselves,
and to give witness as children of your light.

May this strengthen our resolve to build, right here,
an ever-more inclusive community of welcome for all.

Amen.

Services at Essex Church in August and September

Sunday 6th August, 11am – ‘On Being Wrong’

Service led by Jane Blackall

When we make a mistake or wrong-turning in life it can be tempting to ‘double-down’ and dig ourselves into an ever deeper hole rather than admitting we are wrong and putting things right. In today’s service of readings, reflections and hymns we will consider the societal forces which encourage this sort of behaviour and the spiritual practices which might nip it in the bud.

Sunday 13th August, 11am – ‘The Wisdom of Humility’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

We’ll consider the wisdom of humility and the value of pride.

Sunday 20th August, 11am ‘Triumph of the Heart’

Service led by Tristan Jovanović

In today’s service we will be exploring a faith of questions. Separated from the traditional church, Christianity is an entirely different creature. A progressive religion for the future, with arms open to all, can be built on freedom, reason and tolerance.

Sunday 27th August, 11am – ‘Victories of the Spirit’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How loss in life sometimes leads to gain. (It’s Carnival so don’t park on single yellow lines today. Buses / tubes will be plentiful.)

Sunday 3rd September – ‘A Sense of Vocation’

Service led by Jane Blackall

In today’s service we will be considering vocation, in its broadest sense: what is or has been your task or calling in life? What is it that you are in a unique position to contribute to the betterment of humanity or the unfolding of the universe?

Sunday 10th September – ‘Our Common Purpose’

Service led by Sarah Tinker & Joy Croft

Bring water from your summer travels or balcony or garden to contribute to our gathering the waters ceremony, as we consider what a church’s purpose might be in the 21st century.

Sunday 17th September – ‘Unitarian Missionaries’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

What can we learn from Unitarians who worked to improve social conditions?

Sunday 24th September – ‘Harvest Festival – Sowing & Reaping’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall

How shall we best set our intentions for the future? Do bring some seasonal offering to add to our harvest display. Will we be blessed with a giant marrow this year? Today’s service will be followed by a bring-and-share lunch.

What's On...

Thursday 31st August, 7pm
Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 3rd September, 11am-noon
'A Sense of Vocation'
Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 3rd September, 3pm
Visit to Southend Unitarians

Wednesday 6th September, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 7th September, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul':
'The Gifts of the Spirit'
led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 10th September, 11am-noon
'Our Common Purpose'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Rev. Joy Croft

Sunday 10th September, 12.30-1.00pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Wednesday 13th September, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 17th September, 11am-noon
'Unitarian Missionaries'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17th September, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 17th September, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 20th September, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 21st September, 7.15-8.15pm
Singing for the Spirit with Corrina Dolso

Sunday 24th September, 11am-noon
'Harvest Festival – Sowing and Reaping'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker & Jane Blackall
This will include a charity collection for 'Glass Door', a local homeless charity.

Sunday 24th September, 12.30-1.30pm
Congregational Harvest Lunch

Sunday 24th September, 1.15-2.15pm
Sunday Conversation: Mission & Purpose

Wednesday 27th September, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

A Date for Your Diary:

Sunday 22nd October, 2-5pm
Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance

Kensington Yoga Therapy

Early Morning Classes from September 2017



Kensington Yoga Therapy is a small but growing Yoga community based at Essex Unitarian Church. We run daily Mysore style classes. "Mysore style" is really a nickname for self-practice. In a self-practice class you learn sequences of movement aligned with breath, known as vinyasa. These sequences build strength, flexibility, stamina and balance. Learning them 'off by heart' makes the sequences flow naturally, because you are not waiting to be told what to do next. Whenever you come to class, you practice at your own pace, receiving one to one help from the teacher when you need it. In this way, Mysore classes are suitable for anyone, from complete beginners to experienced practitioners of all ages, shapes and sizes. This yoga practice is very therapeutic. I think it is one of the most nurturing and sustainable forms of self-help on the planet...but then, I would say that!

My name is Tom and officially I'm the teacher at KYT but we are all students of this powerfully transformative method. I stumbled upon self-practice a decade ago. I was in my late thirties, with no experience of so called yoga classes. I was a chef in a crazily busy restaurant. I had dodgy knees, a stiff back and an absent mind. Through self-practice classes I learned how to weave yoga into a schedule that was highly unpredictable. After some years I felt the urge to visit the source of the method which had wrought such changes in my life. I took a sabbatical from cooking and travelled to Mysore. I return whenever possible to study with Paramaguru Sharath Jois at the Krishna Pattabhi Jois Astanga Yoga Institute (KPJAYI) and in 2013 was authorised to teach by the institute. Teaching allows me to bring my personal experiences to class. I can show you how to make self-practice a part of almost any kind of daily life...working with rather than against all your other commitments. It can be done!

The Kensington Yoga Therapy class is different to most yoga groups. It was started several years ago by a group of parents who wanted a space to practice after the school run. It has since diversified into a mid-morning class for all. From September 2017 we will be open daily Monday to Friday, from 6.30 through to 10.30am. This will make the classes accessible for anyone wishing to practice before work or school, as well as those who prefer a later start time. Don't forget, the length of your practice will be tailored to suit your schedule.

Prices are flexible to reflect the need for yoga therapy in all parts of the community. I can offer student and concessional rates to all age groups. This country has a fine tradition of yoga classes in church halls but I think the Unitarians are the first to host a daily self-practice group and I'm grateful for the opportunity to teach here. The first steps we take towards yoga feel very much like physical exercise but the ultimate aim of focusing on the breath is peace of mind. Yoga is a moving meditation and this beautiful, spiritual space is the perfect place to try it.

For more details about our Mysore style classes and Astanga Yoga visit my website www.yogawithtom.london or our Facebook page @kensingtonyogatherapy. Alternatively call me on 07717504833.

Tom Norrington-Davies